

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

[To accompany bill S. 562.]

L E T T E R

FROM

THE POSTMASTER GENERAL,

ENCLOSING

*A letter from the president of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad Company, in relation to the difficulties they experienced in carrying the mails in the winter of 1855-'56.*

FEBRUARY 5, 1857.—Ordered to be printed.

P T OFFICE DEPARTMENT,  
January 21, 1857.

SIR: I herewith enclose a copy of a letter addressed to me by the president of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad Company in behalf of that Company, and of the Virginia Central Railroad Company, in relation to the difficulties and extraordinary expenses to which they were subjected in transporting the great mails between this city and Alexandria during the winter of 1855-'56. I also enclose a copy of the account which accompanied the communication, amounting to \$3,473 25.

The representations contained in that letter are, without doubt, correct; and in view of the peculiar embarrassments encountered by those companies during the period stated, from causes beyond their control, I have no hesitation in recommending that Congress grant relief to the extent of said account.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JAMES CAMPBELL.

Hon. THOMAS J. RUSK,  
*United States Senate.*

OFFICE ORANGE AND ALEXANDRIA RAILROAD COMPANY,  
*Alexandria, July 24, 1856.*

SIR: On behalf of the Orange and Alexandria and Virginia Central Railroad Companies, (contractors to carry the great mail between Washington and Richmond,) I beg to present the following applica-

tion for additional compensation in transporting the mails between Washington and Alexandria while navigation was suspended upon the Potomac during the unprecedented cold weather of the last winter. You will remember when our contract was entered into that the allowance made by the department for this branch of the service was exceedingly moderate, and was based upon the expectation that the service could be performed by steamboat, plying as a passenger carrier between the two places. For some years past the interruption of navigation by ice was of short duration, continuing only for a few days. Unlike former and late years, the cold weather of the past winter lasted from the last of December until about the first of March, during the whole of which period the Potomac was ice-locked and all navigation suspended. The mails were carried overland at extraordinary cost to the contracting parties, and for which they think in equity they are entitled to extra compensation. The applicants do not seek to make money out of the government for this service, but they do think that the sums actually paid out to enable the mails to go through with regularity and dispatch, under the extraordinary condition brought about by the prolonged cold weather of last winter, should at least be refunded.

The account made out by the general superintendent, and enclosed herewith, will show that the Orange and Alexandria Railroad Company actually paid out for this extraordinary service the sum of \$3,473 25. To this should fairly be added an amount sufficient to meet the charge incurred by the laying up of their boat and the loss to which the owners were subjected thereby—having to keep the same over and on hand to meet the requirements of the Post Office Department upon the breaking of the ice. This charge may be set down in the sum of at least \$1,500. I believe that I am entirely within bounds in representing the actual loss by suspension of navigation for the extraordinary period stated, to the contractors at least at the sum of \$5,000, in round numbers. If the department had relied upon the old line of communication by Aquia creek, the service must have been altogether suspended for two months, and the department subjected to an additional expense for the special service of at least \$20,000. For the reasons stated, we think that the government will be doing nothing more than sheer justice in granting the small sum now asked, upon a fair review of all the facts.

The former contractors have heretofore received extra pay for performing the service while the Potomac was frozen over for a few days only, instead of months, as of last winter, having to incur heavy expenses in meeting the difficulties caused by the ice; and I think that our case appeals with far more force to the equity of the department and of Congress.

Trusting that you will take the matter into consideration and allow the claim herewith presented, if within your competency, and if not, recommend it to the favorable consideration of Congress.

I have the honor to be, with high respect, your obedient servant,

JOHN S. BARBOUR, JR.,

*President, &c.*

Hon. JAMES CAMPBELL,  
*Postmaster General.*

*Amounts paid for carrying United States mail, caused by the necessity of transporting it by the turnpike instead of by the boat.*

Hugh Latham .....	\$1,427 00
Hugh Latham .....	304 00
J. Chatham & Bro.....	980 00
William Whaley.....	712 00
James T. Rudd.....	50 25
Total .....	<u>3,473 25</u>

H. W. VANDEGRIFT,  
*General Superintendent.*

JULY 24, 1856.

